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ABSTRACT

The Connecticut State Incentives Project to Identify and Reward Exemplary Teaching began with a twofold purpose: first, to provide assistance to seven local districts in developing plans to identify and reward exemplary teaching, and second, to enable the Connecticut State Department of Education to share the common elements of these plans with districts throughout the state. In developing the district programs, specific activities were selected, based on the identified needs and purpose of the organization. Though these programs varied, common threads in their success were sincerity and trust. Three program components provide a framework for activities: (1) recognition component--activities which recognize all teachers as valued professionals and recognize exemplary teachers and/or specific achievements; (2) incentive component--activities and awards which encourage higher levels of effort toward personal and professional development; and (3) support component--activities which assist teachers in their continued pursuit of personal and professional development. These activities are outlined and the process of building an effective recognition and incentive program is described. Examples and characteristics of exemplary teaching are included in the appendices. (JD)

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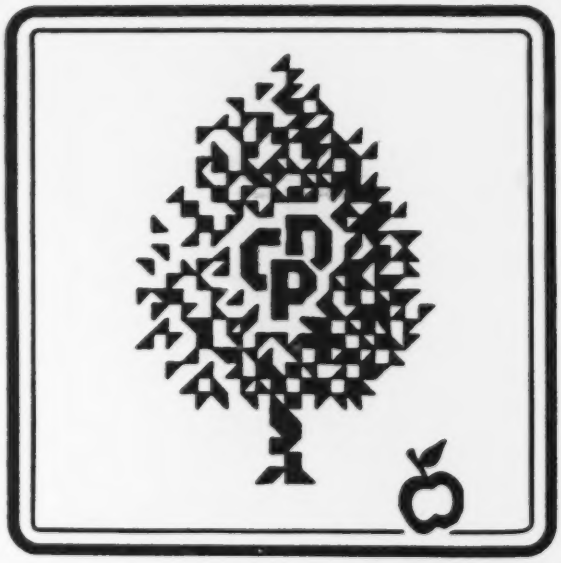
Challenge for the Future

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING EXEMPLARY TEACHERS



Developing a Teacher Recognition and Incentive Program

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The "Connecticut State Incentives Project to Identify and Reward Exemplary Teaching" began with a twofold purpose: first, to provide assistance to seven local districts in developing plans to identify and reward exemplary teaching, and second, to enable the Connecticut State Department of Education to share the common elements of these plans with districts throughout the state. Between March and May, 1985, representatives from the seven Connecticut school districts participated in eight study sessions, sharing philosophy and policy regarding recognition of exemplary teaching. Each team then prepared a district plan for identifying and rewarding excellence in teaching. These district plans fulfilled the first purpose of the project. This document addresses the second purpose: the development of a handbook to assist other districts interested in establishing teacher recognition and incentive programs.

Participating Districts

- Bloomfield
- Meriden
- Regional District 1
- Regional District 5
- Trumbull
- West Hartford
- West Haven

Project Director: Dr. Marjorie K. Bradley
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A steady decline in the pool of available effective teachers has raised concern about a pending teacher shortage. Adding to the concern is the slow but steady exodus of exemplary teachers to business and industry. Together, these two trends have the potential to seriously harm the teaching and learning going on in our schools.

A major challenge for local districts is to find ways to reverse these trends by retaining exemplary teachers and by attracting new teachers with similar potential. Teachers are, after all, our most important educational resource. They will be more likely to remain in the profession in a school district where both the school organization and the community perceive them as respected professionals and provide them with recognition, a high quality of work life and opportunities for professional growth.

School districts with a clear mandate to provide programs that support and recognize teachers and teaching as a valuable asset will unlock the potential for success--success for the districts, the teachers, and the students.

Success for the District:
Recruiting and Retaining Staff

Research indicates that when people are recognized and rewarded for their efforts in a way that seems appropriate to them, they are likely to continue those efforts. Additionally, when an individual's value is affirmed, that person is more likely to remain motivated, maintain a sense of commitment and work at a high level of productivity.

By affirming the value of teachers, we increase the professional image and status of teaching. Districts which embrace these tenents will be attractive to new teachers entering the profession, will enjoy increased productivity and loyalty among staff and will unlock the potential for success.

Success for the Teacher:
Maintaining the Highest Level
of Motivation and Commitment

Successful recognition programs enhance job satisfaction, foster healthy human relationships and strengthen effective teaching. A teacher whose contribution is recognized and valued will experience increased feelings of self-worth and status; this teacher will unlock the potential for success.

Success for the Student:
Receiving the Best Education
Possible

When teachers view themselves as professionals in the teaching/learning process, their students will gain. Teachers who are motivated to learn and vigorously pursue personal and professional growth are positive role models for students. These teachers, in demonstrating a commitment to intellectual endeavors, set a tone in the classroom and in the school. Additionally, as teachers continue their own learning, they not only provide a positive role model for students, but they become better able to provide them with the best education possible.

The seven districts participating in the "Connecticut State Incentive Project to Identify and Reward Exemplary Teaching," generated a wealth of ideas for Teacher Recognition and Incentive Programs. The participants' commitment to this project was based on the belief that by developing an incentive and reward program they would be fulfilling a professional responsibility to assist the teachers in their districts. They brought to the project a sense of purpose. They believed that, by providing opportunities for teachers to be recognized and rewarded, they would affirm the value of teaching and positively affect the quality of teaching.

In developing the district programs, specific activities were selected based on the identified needs and purposes of the organization. Though these programs varied, common threads in their success were sincerity and trust. The three categories defined below provide a framework for the specific activities that follow.

Recognition Component. Activities which recognize all teachers as valued professionals. Activities which recognize exemplary teachers and/or specific achievements.

Incentive Component. Activities and awards which encourage higher levels of effort toward personal and professional development.

Support Component. Activities which assist teachers in their continued pursuit of personal and professional development.

Recognition Component

Activities which recognize all teachers as valued professionals should be ongoing and include district-wide activities which take place in the schools and community. They can be sponsored by teachers, administrator, students, and parents. Activities which recognize all teachers or achievements of specific teachers are unlimited. The key element in this type of recognition activity is to include specific reasons for the recognition when announcing and introducing award winners. The following are suggestions for specific recognition activities.

Recognition Activities

- Recognize positive accomplishments at a staff meeting, board meeting, or PTA meeting.
- Recognize team teaching groups for innovative teaching practices.

- o Acknowledge special projects with positive comments, a written note, or a visit by a central office administrator.

- o Recognize a school faculty for special projects or exemplary teaching.

- o Chronicle achievements of teachers in district newsletters, school newsletters, or the local press.

- o Affirm the value of teaching and teachers through an appreciation breakfast, luncheon, tea or banquet.

- o Provide opportunities for teachers to conduct workshops or make presentations for their peers.

- o Encourage teachers to submit their exemplary teaching practices to the statewide CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE Program.

- o Nominate exemplary teachers for participation in the local, state, and national Teacher of the Year Program.

In addition to recognition activities, a district may choose to provide recognition awards. These may range from plaques and certificates to nominations for Teacher of the Year. The awards, whether monetary, nominations or gifts, recognize teachers who have made a positive contribution to education.

Incentive Component

Activities which encourage both personal and professional development result in more effective teaching and are a very valuable part of any teacher incentive package. While the details for incentive activities must be developed by the individual district (Appendix D), general description of possible activities follow.

Minigrants. Minigrants for teachers are provided to support the development and implementation of specific projects that will improve the curriculum, improve effective instruction and create exemplary classroom practices. These grants are awarded through an application process which is reviewed by a minigrant committee.

Sabbatical Leave. The district provides monies for one or more teachers to take full leave at partial pay in order to engage in activities of mutual benefit to self and system.

Mini leave. A mini leave recognition program provides exemplary teachers with uninterrupted time and financial support to pursue self-directed, professional study.

Training. A program which provides professional training to teachers for the purpose of improving effective instruction will enhance and improve the teaching-learning climate. Such a program could prepare teachers to become mentors or coaches for other teachers.

Professional Support/ Assistance Component

These activities represent a district's commitment to support and assist teachers who, on their own initiative or otherwise, pursue excellence in their personal and professional life. Descriptions of possible activities follow.

Professional growth program. A professional growth program, such as a career ladder or seventh year, provides alternatives by which staff members can progress on the salary schedule.

Stipends and credits. Stipends and credits provide incentives for teachers who participate in courses and workshops which will assist them in the pursuit of effective teaching.

Course remuneration. Course remuneration provides incentives for teachers to pursue accredited course work in planned educational programs.

Professional days/release time. Professional days and release time provide opportunities for teachers to pursue professional development activities or course work.

CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE. This activity provides recognition and rewards for teachers who have developed and implemented exemplary teaching projects.

Professional development programs. Professional development programs provide quality in-service activities and summer workshops for teachers, thus leading to more effective instruction. They also provide opportunities for job swaps and administrative internships.

General leave policy. General leave policy provides opportunities for teachers to take a year (or part of) off from regular teaching to engage in activities that will enhance their teaching.

Substitute program. The substitute program provides competent substitutes who can be relied upon to provide good instruction when the teacher is absent.

Personal support. Personal support programs provide professional assistance for concerns involving job or family as well as seminars on issues of personal concern such finances, family illness, and depression.

Personal health educational program. A personal health education program provides opportunities for health audits and exercise.

Conclusion

Districts that maintain an ongoing agenda of recognition and incentive activities for teachers who pursue excellence in their personal and professional lives, are making a clear statement that they are communities where exemplary teaching is valued, recognized and rewarded. These communities will have a better chance of keeping excellent staff and, additionally, they will be attractive to the well prepared, highly motivated college student seeking a teaching career. These communities will continue to provide the best education possible for their citizens.

By implementing these suggestions, districts will be likely to experience the following outcomes.

Success for the district

- keeping exemplary teachers
- recruiting new teachers
- promoting effective teaching
- affirming the value of teaching

Success for the teacher

- increased job satisfaction
- increased commitment and motivation
- developing effective teaching
- improving the quality of work life

Success for the student

- the best possible teachers
- the best possible teaching and learning

The following "Process" section of this report will assist a district in developing its own Recognition and Incentive Program.

THE PROCESS: BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION AND INCENTIVE PROGRAM

When a district makes the commitment to develop a recognition and incentive program, a coordinator must be selected and a committee organized. The coordinator must be someone with authority and leadership, able to advise and/or chair the committee. As a part of the committee, the coordinator serves as a leader and a link to the superintendent. This ensures that the committee is empowered and kept informed as to budget and programming parameters. The committee structure should include representation from all areas of the professional staff, selected by their peers or self-selected. The purpose for the committee is to develop and implement a teacher recognition and incentive program. Additionally, individual committee members will be charged with regularly communicating progress to and soliciting input from those whom they represent. Sub-committees may be formed to carry out specific tasks or address particular issues. Using the following hierarchy of tasks as a guide, the committee can begin to clarify the focus of the recognition and incentive program, select activities based on the need and purpose for the district, and develop a meaningful, practical program which is supported by teachers, administrators and the community.

Planning

- Conduct an informal assessment of staff morale and job satisfaction.
- Review staff turnover and absenteeism.
- Identify what activities, incentives and awards are in place in the district.
- Identify what needs teachers perceive as unfulfilled.

Developing

- Clarify the mission of the committee and the responsibility of each member.
- Select and develop activities from each of the three components; recognition, incentive, and support.
- Develop criteria for exemplary teaching and teaching practices (Appendices A, B, and C)

Implementing

- Establish a time line for implementation.
- Clarify and refine specific roles and responsibilities.
- Implement program.

SUMMARY

The collective work of the seven participating districts has been documented in this report to provide assistance to others who seek to develop recognition and incentive programs. By the end of the eight study sessions, each district had struggled with the problems surrounding teacher recognition, incentives, and awards.

One of the most difficult issues the participants faced was how to reward a segment of the faculty without creating a polarization which would generate resentment toward those who were recognized. The group agreed that any incentive plan should initially recognize and reward all professional staff in some way and then move toward a differentiated recognition and reward system.

Another major issue was the question of what objective criteria could be used to identify, not merely the competent teachers, but those who are the truly exceptional. After lengthy and often heated discussion, participants decided to use the Connecticut Teaching Competencies as minimum criteria. In addition, each district would expand its criteria by selecting from lists generated during the sessions (see Appendices A and B) as well as incorporating local ideas.

Each of the seven participating districts produced a plan to develop a teacher recognition and incentive program. Several of these plans are now being implemented by the districts and can serve as models for others. Given the disparate needs, budgets, and staffing of school districts throughout the state, no two programs will be alike, but the participatory process through which a program is built is constant.

The purpose of this handbook has been to share the ideas and conclusions generated by the program participants as they tackled the issues and developed their district plans. The numerous activities and suggestions described in this report attest to the commitment of these participants toward affirming the value of teachers and teaching.

APPENDIX A
EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WHICH TEACHERS MAY BE RECOGNIZED AND REWARDED

- Teachers who have developed projects to improve the curriculum.
- Teachers who have developed instructional innovations.
- Teachers who have successfully applied staff development learnings.
- Teachers who have developed projects which improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers who have implemented new activities and programs.
- Teachers who have communicated the value of the profession of teaching to the community.
- Teachers who have contributed to and improved the quality of work life in the school community.
- Teachers who have contributed to and improved the quality of work life in the school community.
- Teachers who have contributed to scholarly publications.
- Teachers who have played leadership roles in state, regional and national discussions on educational issues.

APPENDIX B
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXEMPLARY TEACHERS GENERATED BY THE SEVEN DISTRICTS DURING THE MARCH 5, 1985 - STUDY GROUP SESSION

An exemplary teacher demonstrates a positive attitude, high expectations, creativity and enthusiasm. Moreover, he or she should have:

- command of his or her subject
- proficiency in the mechanics of teaching
- ability to observe, diagnose and prescribe
- dedication to professional ethics
- mutual respect for and the ability to work with peers
- knowledge of learning styles and teaching styles
- problem solving skills and conflict resolution skills
- high expectations for self and students
- positive attitude and self-image
- skills in classroom planning, organization and control
- a caring, humanistic attitude
- a drive toward professional development
- ability to relate well to parents and community
- ability to motivate students and inspire learning.

APPENDIX C
EXEMPLARY TEACHING

While the focus of a Recognition and Incentive Program is to affirm the value of all teachers and teaching, many of the awards and rewards are designated for an individual exemplary teacher or teaching practice. Therefore, to assist the committee in establishing criteria for exemplary teaching, the participating districts identified the following resources.

Connecticut Teaching Competencies, a comprehensive list of clearly stated objectives for effective teaching. (Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Professional Development)

Evertson, Carolyn, M. and Freda M. Holley. "Classroom Observation," in Handbook of Teacher Evaluation, Jason Millman, ed. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1981.

Hutchins, C.L. Barbara J. Guzzetti, and Ann M. Riley. "Review of the Research on Effective Schools and Effective Teaching." Aurora, Colorado: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 1984.

McGreal, Thomas L., Successful Teacher Evaluation. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1983.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. "Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis." Portland, Oregon: 1984.

Purkey, Stewart C. and Marshall S. Smith. "Effective Schools: A Review," Elementary School Journal. Volume 83, Number 4, March 1983.

APPENDIX D
CHECKLIST: DEVELOPING AN INCENTIVE PROJECT

1.	Responsibility	Who will be in charge?
2.	Funding	What is the funding source? What are the budget parameters?
3.	Mission	Define the activity with a clear statement. Determine the purpose.
4.	Goals/Objectives	Develop specific goals and objectives for the activity.
5.	Organization	Develop procedures for implementing the activity. How do participants apply? What is the selection criteria? Who determines award winners? How are awards administered?
6.	Evaluation	How is the activity evaluated?

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